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Loomis, Nebraska

407 Hearing Testimony on Expanded Duties

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Good morning. My name is Lindsay Hays and I am testifying in the neutral position regarding the specific proposals. However, I am speaking in favor of expanding the scope of practice for both assistants and hygienists with required training.

My background is that I graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I decided to pursue dentistry in 2006, graduating in 2007 from the Central Community College dental assisting program and in 2009 from the Iowa Western dental hygiene program.

I had been practicing dental hygiene in Omaha for most of my career. In 2013, my husband accepted a position with a company in rural Nebraska. I started my job search immediately in the anticipation of making a move. It quickly became apparent that the job search was not going to be easy in rural Nebraska. I looked week after week, delivered several resumes, and after six months I had only had two interviews with practices that offered me one to two days of work per week. I found myself questioning my chosen profession. Why is the dental profession so much different than the medical profession? The answer to my question was simple. There are no career advancement opportunities for a hygienist or an assistant. I had, in a sense, already reached the pinnacle of my career after only practicing for five years.

For example, in nursing there are several avenues for career advancement; ASN, LPN, RN, BSN, APRN, the list goes on. A medical doctor can easily delegate duties and base their hiring practices on what level of training they prefer in their staff. In the dental world there is a dental assistant and a registered dental hygienist. The dentist cannot delegate certain duties and they do not have the option to due to the restrictions of our current statutes. All of this equals less access to care in rural Nebraska and far less job opportunities for our profession.

I love what I do, but I am starting to wonder what the future will hold. Having the ability to work side by side with my dentist doing minor restorative procedures, which is consistent with both proposals, is ideal.

I realize not every hygienist will have the desire to take their skills to the next level, nor will every dentist feel comfortable delegating such duties. I am fortunate to currently work in a practice setting that puts hygienists in a position with a high level of responsibility. I absolutely agree that when adding clinical duties to any health profession advanced training and education is paramount. I would be eager to advance my career and provide a better service to my patients and the community should the opportunity arise.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.